

**Riparian Vegetation Management Task Force  
meeting minutes  
Wednesday, Nov. 14, 2007; Grand Island, Nebraska**

1. Call to order – Chairman Charles Brooks called the meeting to order. Roll call was taken. Task Force members present:

Dr. Gary Cunningham  
Kent Aden  
Mike Clements (late arrival)  
Jim Miller  
Greg Ibach  
Charles Brooks  
Mike Linder  
Russ Shultz  
Ann Bleed

Mike Arps  
Rich Tesar  
Mike Sarchet  
Kirk Nelson  
Gloria Erickson  
Senator Don Preister  
Senator Cap Dierks  
Senator John Harms  
Senator Tom Carlson (late arrival).

Task Force members absent were:

Scott Josiah  
Tom Thompson

Senator Deb Fischer  
John Erickson.

Task Force members who sent alternates were:

Ron Bishop sent Milt Moravek

Guests present included:

Jason Alexander  
John Thorburn  
Ritch Nelson  
NDA staff members Rich Reiman, Mitch Coffin, and Bobbie Kriz-Wickham.

2. Brooks noted the availability of information on the Open Meetings Act.
3. Brooks opened discussion on the minutes from the October 3, 2007, meeting. Ibach made a motion to approve the minutes. Bleed seconded the motion.  
  
Roll call vote: In support of the motion: Cunningham, Aden, Miller, Ibach, Brooks, Linder, Shultz, Bleed, Arps, Tesar, Sarchet, Nelson, Gloria Erickson, Senator Preister, Senator Dierks, and Senator Harms. Voting against the motion: none.
4. Old Business discussion was delayed in order to allow time for Senator Carlson to arrive. Under New Business, Jason Alexander with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources gave the Task Force a review of his literature research on Water Use by Riparian Vegetation.

He said there is no direct method for measuring plant evapotranspiration (ET). He reviewed the three models that are used, as well as the three scales of measurement: tree/plant, stand, and catchment. He reviewed the various riparian ET research that has been conducted, or is ongoing, in Nebraska.

He summarized the results of water yield research projects in North Carolina, Arizona, and New Mexico.

Mike Clements arrived.

Alexander said the literature review has lead him to three preliminary conclusions: (1) reduction of vegetation from the channel bed will show noticeable/measurable increases in channel conveyance; (2) reduction of invasive species from the river corridor will reduce ET, at least temporarily; and (3) because a direct link between vegetation removal and streamflow are difficult to measure, water yields will be difficult to constrain.

Task Force members discussed the difficulty of attaining research that can adequately address all influencing factors.

5. Work Group Reports were given.

- a. Kent Aden presented the Vegetation Management and Treatment Work Group Report. The group met November 7 in Gibbon with 13 individuals present. The work group heard a presentation from a University of Florida specialist in large scale aquatic management programs. Aden said the work group offered these points for consideration of the Task Force: (1) Work groups need to coordinate as there will be some overlap in purpose; (2) Creation of a rapid response team and fund is important; (3) A best management plan is needed; and (4) Who decides what invasives will be addressed first? The group suggested phragmites, saltcedar, and Russian olive.

Senator Carlson arrived.

The group will begin gathering information on treatment projects that have already been done and on those that are ongoing, including information on cost and effectiveness of various treatment methods.

The Task Force discussed Aden's earlier question about determining what species to target for treatment, which lead to a broader discussion about the purpose and intent of LB 701. Senator Carlson highlighted the emphasis on removing vegetation for streamflow conveyance in the streambed. There was some question about measurement of the impact of such removal in order to validate the work for the Legislature. Bleed said exact measurements may be difficult but enough information can be gathered to make good assumptions. It will take a coordinated effort, including working with the University, to gather the data.

The Task Force discussed the importance of utilizing best management practices to allow for appropriate, controlled revegetation, and/or maintenance of the streambed once the invasive removal is complete.

6. With Senator Carlson's arrival, the group returned to Old Business. Senator Carlson reviewed the activities at the hearing on Legislative Resolution 106. He said the testimony and reports at the hearing were mostly positive. Some concerns were expressed about the difficulty of quantifying invasive vegetation water use, he said.
7. Work Group reports were resumed.
  - a. Senator Carlson presented the Goals, Objectives, and Reports Work Group Report. The work group met last week and came up with three draft goals for the Task Force to consider. (See attached Draft Goals document.) These goals were reviewed by the Task Force. Members discussed the effects of vegetation removal on the channel. Aden said once the vegetation is gone, the improved water flow should help maintain the health of the river channel, but monitoring will be key. The group also discussed the importance of landowner education, including the sharing of success stories.

Russ Shultz made a motion to adopt the Goals Document that was prepared by the Goals, Objectives, and Reports Work Group. Sarchet seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: In support of the motion: Cunningham, Aden, Clements, Miller, Ibach, Brooks, Linder, Shultz, Bleed, Arps, Tesar, Sarchet, Nelson, Gloria Erickson, Senator Preister, Senator Carlson, Senator Dierks, and Senator Harms. Voting against the motion: none.

- b. Tesar presented the Survey and Monitoring Work Group report. The group met just prior to the full Task Force meeting. Tesar said the group discussed the need to gather information about, and summarize, past and current invasive vegetation control activities, and then to conduct an evaluation of these activities. He said the group also discussed the need to identify the extent of, and location of, infestations. As an example of activities being done in this area, the work group received a report from U.S. Fish and Wildlife staff about its GIS work to identify plant groups and composition along the Platte River. The Task Force discussed the availability of this type of existing data and the need to coordinate efforts, if possible.

Tesar said the Survey and Monitoring Work Group will also develop recommendations for a system of ongoing measurement and monitoring. He noted the potential for cooperation with county weed entities, as well as utilization of GIS.

- c. Clements presented the Education and Awareness Work Group report. The group met last week. Clements said much of the discussion centered around methods for keeping the public informed of Task Force activities. He said the group believes press releases will be a key communication element, and they would like to see the Nebraska Department of Agriculture serve as the lead on this. The group also discussed the need to identify target groups for outreach and the need to create talking points for future meetings.

The Task Force talked about how the other work groups can aid the Education and Awareness Work Group by feeding it important information for public dissemination.

The group discussed how landowners who have participated in successful riparian invasive removal projects can play an important role in the education process.

- d. Arps said the Funding and Incentives Work Group had not yet met, but would try to do so in the coming weeks.
- e. Shultz presented the Streambed Ownership Work Group report. The group met October 23 with 12 people present. He said that the group discussed the need for clear designation of ownership within the streambed. He said Nebraska law does not address this point, so English common law is used, which ties ownership of the bank of the stream to the center of the stream or "thread of the stream." He said Nebraska counties, particularly on the Platte River, treat this issue differently.

Shultz said the group also discussed riparian ownership responsibilities; they do not believe the State has any laws addressing this issue.

Shultz said a structure is needed to provide for long-term management of Nebraska streams and rivers. The work group will survey Platte River counties to gather information that can help members determine what type of structure may be best.

Bleed said a land use attorney would be a good addition to the work group as this discussion progresses. The Task Force discussed the possible need for legislation to address this issue.

- f. Bleed reported that the Vegetation Water Use Work Group had not yet met, but that the literature research that Jason Alexander reported on earlier in the meeting would be used as a baseline of information for the group.
- 8. Under Other Items, Brooks and the Task Force laid out a timeline for constructing the report that needs to be turned into Governor Heineman by December 15.
    - a. As part of Open Floor Discussion, Brooks introduced Ritch Nelson, who was in the audience representing the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. He discussed the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and some of the cost-share and incentives that have been built into the program for invasive vegetation control.
  - 9. The next Task Force meeting will be Monday, January 14, at 1:00 p.m. at Hardin Hall on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus. University researchers that are working on riparian invasive vegetation management issues will be the presenters.
  - 10. The meeting adjourned at 2:05 p.m.